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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9604
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 6664
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 6544
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1568
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ OCT 4995
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 6874
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 0887
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY 0317
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 1466
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 1932
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 002139

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [ECON](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: NEAR-COMPLETE ELECTION RESULTS CONFIRM IMPRESSIVE
VICTORY BY CRISTINA KIRCHNER, ARGENTINA'S NEXT PRESIDENT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2126

11. (SBU) Summary: As of October 29, with ballots from approximately 96.5% of the voting stations tallied, Senator and First Lady Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) maintains an insurmountable lead in the presidential race with 44.91% of the total vote. Second-place finisher, center-left candidate Elisa Carrio conceded the race six-and-a-half hours after the polls closed, but vowed to assume the role of leader of Argentina's political opposition. The press reports that CFK has taken congratulatory calls so far from Lula, Hugo Chavez, Nicanor Duarte, Michelle Bachelet, and Rafael Correa. As predicted by local polls leading to the election, Kirchner's Victory Front party (FPV) held its majority in the Senate and gained control of the Chamber of Deputies. End Summary.

Kirchner Victory

12. (SBU) As of 2:00 pm local time on October 29, Senator and First Lady Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) maintains an insurmountable lead in the presidential race with 44.91% (8,197,756) of the total vote. Just under 94% of the total votes were cast for a specific candidate; about 5% were blank, 1.12% were invalid, and 0.18% were duplicates.

13. (SBU) The second-place finisher, center-left candidate Elisa Carrio conceded the race at approximately 1:35 am local time on the morning of October 29, but said she will continue as the leader of the Argentine political opposition. She received 22.96% of the vote (i.e., 4,188,660 ballots). Ex-Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna received 16.89% or 3,081,922 votes to finish in third place, a showing that was widely viewed as a disappointment. San Luis Governor Alberto Rodriguez Saa finished with 7.72% or 1,407,652 votes, approximately what local polls had predicted he would receive. The ten other presidential candidates each received less than 2% of the total votes.

14. (SBU) According to local press reports, CFK has taken congratulatory calls so far from Brazil's Lula da Silva, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, Paraguay's Nicanor Duarte-Frutos, Chile's Michelle Bachelet, and Ecuador's Rafael Correa. The Brazilian Ambassador (protect) told the Ambassador that Lula plans to attend the December 10 inauguration of CFK and a farewell dinner for Nestor Kirchner on December 9.

Senate Results

15. (SBU) As predicted by local polls leading to the election, Kirchner's Victory Front party (FPV) maintained its majority position in the Argentine Senate. According to local newspaper estimates of the final seat distribution, the FPV defended its twelve seats in question in the Senate and picked up one more, giving the party 41 total seats out of 72. The FPV is also expected to enjoy the support of another seven non-FPV senators who are considered to be reliable Kirchner allies. Carrio's Civic Coalition was the election's surprise, winning four new senate seats for a total representation of five. The Radical Civic Union (UCR), which backed Lavagna, lost five seats for a total of 10. Meanwhile, the dissident Peronist lost seats, reducing their representation to four seats. Other local and provincial parties share the remaining nine seats.

16. (SBU) Eight provinces had Senate elections: the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Chaco, Entre Rios, Neuquen, Rio Negro, Salta, Santiago del Estero, and Tierra del Fuego. Each province has three representatives in the Senate: two from the majority political party and one from the minority party that wins the most votes. Terms in the Senate are for six years, with elections every two years to renew one-third of the seats. There are no restrictions on repeated reelection. The vice president serves as the president of the Senate and has the tie-breaking vote. According to the Argentine Constitution, candidates for the Argentine Senate must: be at least 30 years old, have been a citizen of Argentina for six years, and be native to the province of his/her office (or have been a resident of that province for two years).

Chamber of Deputies Results

17. (SBU) According to local newspaper estimates of how the complicated D'Hondt formula would affect distribution of the 130 seats that were up for grabs in the Chamber of Deputies, the FPV (including allied Radicals, socialists, and others) gained 20 seats, giving it control of 131 seats, just over the quorum level of 129. In addition to the 131 FPV deputies, however, another 29 deputies in the Chamber are considered Kirchner allies, giving CFK a comfortable majority of the 258 votes in the Chamber. Carrio's Civic Coalition is expected to gain 19 seats for a total of 27. Lavagna-backed candidates are estimated to have lost 7 seats, bringing the UCR's totals down to 30 representatives (meaning that, for all the Radicals' troubles, they remain the second biggest bloc in the Chamber). Rodriguez Saa and the dissident Peronists are expected to have lost 15 seats for a total of 36 total seats for the incoming Chamber of Deputies. Buenos Aires Mayor-elect Mauricio Macri's PRO party is predicted to lose 11 seats for a new total of 13. The remaining 25 seats are divided among provincial and local parties.

18. (SBU) Representation in the Chamber of Deputies (Argentina's Congressional Lower House) is based on provincial population. Provinces receive one deputy for each 161,000 inhabitants. The distribution of seats per province has not been adjusted since 1983 and is based on the 1980 census. Buenos Aires province has 70 deputies; Buenos Aires City 25; Santa Fe 19; Cordoba 18; Mendoza 10; Entre Rios and Tucuman each have 9; Chaco, Corrientes, Misiones, Salta and Santiago del Estero each have 7; Jujuy and San Juan have 6 each; and Chubut, Formosa, La Pampa, La Rioja, Neuquen, Rio

Negro, San Luis, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego each have 5 deputies. Deputy terms are for four years and are elected by the D'Hondt formula of proportional representation. According to the Argentine Constitution, candidates for the Argentine Chamber of Deputies must be at least 25 years old, have been a citizen of Argentina for four years, and be native of the province of his/her office (or have been a resident of that province for two years). There are no restrictions on repeated reelection. Political parties must receive a three percent minimum of the national vote to receive a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) CFK is surely comforted by the knowledge that her FPV has a simple majority in both houses of Congress. Even more important, however, is the magnitude of her almost 22-percentage-point victory over her nearest rival, which equals the total number of votes won by her husband in the first -- and ultimately only -- round of the last Argentine presidential election. Cristina's convincing electoral triumph should strengthen her political hand, providing her with the political capital she desperately needs to tackle the many policy challenges that confront her government.

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